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Reformed church in America. Classis of New York

RULES

BX
9519
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OF THE

CLASSIS OF NEW-YORK,

AS AMENDED

APRIL, 1819.

New-York:

PRINTED BY ABRAHAM PAUL, 182 WATER-STREET.


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RULES

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PREAMBLE.

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ALL Ecclesiastical power is derived from the Lord Jesus, as the great Head of the Church; and its exercise is the application of his laws to the preservation and well-being of that spiritual body, of which he is the Head. All canons and decisions must, in consequence, be regulated by the principle, the nature, and the spirit of his laws, laid down to us in his word.

FORMATION.

ARTICLE I.

The Classis of New-York hold two ordinary sessions; the one on the third Tuesday in April—the other on the third Tuesday in October, in each and every year. Both sessions shall be opened in the Consistory Chamber in Garden-street, in the city of

New-York, at ten o'clock, A. M. on the respective days. But in case any prevalent disease or other calamity may render it unsafe for members to convene in New-York, it shall be the duty of the President of the Classis (or in case of his absence or inability, of the Clerk) to give to the members at least ten days notice to meet in some congregation in the vicinity of the city.

ARTICLE II.

The Classis may meet on their own adjournment to any intermediate day: or they may hold extraordinary sessions. But no extraordinary meeting shall, at any time, be called, unless at least two members shall certify to the President of the Classis, for the time being, in writing, the necessity of such meeting, and the special business to be transacted. Whereupon the President shall send, at least ten days previous to such extra meeting, circular letters to all the Ministers and to all the Churches belonging to the Classis, as well to those which are vacant, as to those which are supplied with Ministers: which circular letters shall define the place, the day, and the hour of meeting, and the special business to be transacted. In these extra sessions, the business specified in the circulars, and no other business whatever, shall be transacted; and a copy of such specification from one of the circulars shall always be inserted in the minutes of the extra session. The duties of the President mentioned in this article may, in his name and at his request, be performed by the Clerk.

ARTICLE III.

The session of Classis shall be opened with prayer by the President, or in his absence by the Clerk, or if both be absent, by the senior Minister present. The credentials of Elders delegated to the Classis shall be presented to the Clerk, who, finding them regular, shall record the names of the persons as members of the Classis. Irregular or doubtful credentials shall be produced to the Classis by the Clerk, for their decision. But no Elder shall have a seat as a member of the Classis, unless he was expressly delegated—as he must prove by a written certificate, to attend the ordinary meeting at which he appears; and if he appear at an extra meeting, he must still have such a certificate, or have had a seat at the last ordinary meeting.

ARTICLE IV.

After the opening of the Classis, new officers shall be chosen; and the minutes of the last ordinary session, and of the intermediate extraordinary sessions, shall be read. The Classis will attend divine service in the afternoon of the first day of the session; which shall be performed by the President who last filled the chair, or by the late Clerk. The sermon shall be regularly preached in the North Church, at half past three o'clock, and shall always be an appropriate *concio ad clerum*; and the members of the Classis shall always attend. Notice of the nature of the discourse, and of the time and place of delivering it, shall always be given from the pulpits of all the Churches under the care of the Classis.

OFFICERS.**ARTICLE I.**

The President, the Clerks, and the Questor of the Classis, shall always be chosen by ballot.

ARTICLE II.

The duty of the *President* is sufficiently defined in the Constitution. It is here only added, that he may speak to points of order in preference to other members; that he shall decide questions of order, subject to an appeal to the Classis by any two members; and that he shall nominate all committees, to be confirmed by the Classis.

ARTICLE III.

There shall be two Clerks of Classis. The one appointed at every *ordinary* meeting shall attend the session, and note the business.

ARTICLE IV.

The *stated Clerk* shall record the minutes in a fair hand in the Classical Book: it shall be his duty always to exhibit the Classical Book at the meeting of the Classis, a copy of the Constitution of the Reformed Dutch Church, and at least four copies of the Rules of the Classis for the use of the members while in session. He shall moreover furnish extracts from the minutes to any member who may require them; and it shall be his duty to preserve on docket all written communications to the Classis, on which they may have acted. He shall also, as soon after the

close of every session as may be, give notice to every Minister or Consistory, and to the Chairman of every Committee, as the case may require, of such resolutions or recommendations demanding their attention, as shall have been adopted during such session. It shall also be his business to receive and distribute among the Ministers and Consistories, their proportion of the Minutes of the General Synod, and to give notice of this his appointment to the stated Clerk of General Synod. It shall also be his duty to insert in a book, to be provided by him for that purpose, all those decisions of the Particular and General Synods, since the Appendix to the Constitution was printed, which are amendments or alterations of any of the Rules of Church Government, as well as all additional Rules and Orders passed by either of those bodies, which are in force: and the stated Clerk shall exhibit such book at the meetings of the Classis. And for these his services he shall receive the sum of \$25 per annum.

ARTICLE V.

The minutes shall be kept and recorded in the following order of Lemmata :

FORMATION OF THE CLASSIS.

- Article* 1. Opening of the Classis.
- Article* 2. Members present.
- Article* 3. Absent Members.
- Article* 4. Advisory Members.
- Article* 5. Moderators.
- Article* 6. Reading of Minutes.
- Article* 7. Rules of the Classis.

ACTS OF THE CLASSIS.

- Article 1.* Admission of Members.
- Article 2.* Standing Committees.
- Article 3.* Synodical Injunctions.
- Article 4.* Formation of Churches.
- Article 5.* Vacant Congregations.
- Article 6.* Examination of Students.
- Article 7.* Preaching of Students.
- Article 8.* Approbation of Calls.
- Article 9.* Examination of Candidates.
- Article 10.* Subscribing of the Formulas.
- Article 11.* Customs and Usages.
- Article 12.* Schools and Christian Education.
- Article 13.* Professorate.
- Article 14.* References.
- Article 15.* Appeals.
- Article 16.* Grievances.
- Article 17.* Dismissions and Recommendations.
- Article 18.* Examinators.
- Article 19.* Classical Report.
- Article 20.* Delegates to the Particular Synod.
- Article 21.* Delegates to the General Synod.
- Article 22.* Instructions to Delegates.
- Article 23.* Questorate.
- Article 24.* Censura Morum.
- Article 25.* Particularia.
- Article 26.* Adjournment.
- Article 27.* Resumption and Close.

ARTICLE VI.

It shall be the duty of the *Questor* to receive all moneys belonging to the Classis, payable at their order, and to keep an account of all receipts and disbursements, which shall be exhibited to the

Classis at every ordinary session in the fall. He shall provide a book of accounts, in which he shall open a separate account with each Congregation, in which he shall charge said Congregations respectively with the sums due by them, and credit them for moneys paid, and which he shall bring with him to every stated meeting of the Classis.

ARTICLE VII.

The delegates to the Particular Synod shall always be chosen by ballot: in this method also shall be designated the persons to be recommended by the Classis to the Particular Synod, to be appointed members of the General Synod; provided they be not the same persons as have been chosen delegates to the Particular Synod of the same year.

ARTICLE VIII.

By ballot also, once in every two years, members of Classis shall be appointed, whose duty it shall be to manage particular parts of all examinations which may be held before this Classis. By the appointment of *examinators*, however, the rights of no member of the Classis shall be injured; but it shall be always deemed regular and proper for any member, at any time, on any subject, to ask any question which would have been regular and proper, had no *examinators* been appointed.

ORDER.**ARTICLE I.**

Before the transaction of any business, the President shall call for all such petitions, complaints, references, and appeals, as are to be presented; which, whether presented then, or at any subsequent period of the session, shall be submitted to a Committee of Overtures, (consisting of two Ministers and one Elder, to be appointed at the commencement of every ordinary session) who shall inquire, in all tender and delicate cases, whether the necessary previous steps have been taken, and endeavour to heal all differences, prior to their coming before the Classis. Yet any person may bring up any business without or contrary to the decision of the Committee of Overtures—but his proceeding in such manner is at his own peril.

ARTICLE II.

At every sitting of the Classis, after prayer, the roll shall be called, and the minutes of the preceding transactions of the session shall be read; and at the conclusion of every ordinary and extraordinary meeting of the Classis, the minutes shall be read, and, if necessary, amended.

ARTICLE III.

A motion made, must be seconded, and afterward repeated by the President, or read, before it be debated. Every motion must be reduced to writing

by the member who made it, if it be required. Any member who shall have made a motion shall be at liberty to withdraw it, before any debate be had thereon; but not afterward, without leave of the Classis.

ARTICLE IV.

On questions of order, postponement, commitment, or the previous question, no member shall speak more than once; on all other questions, each member may speak twice, but not oftener, if any person object, without leave of the Classis. When a question is under debate, no motion shall be received, unless to amend—to postpone—to commit—for the previous question—or to adjourn. The previous question shall be in this form: "*Shall the main question be now put?*"—and until it be decided, shall preclude all amendment and further debate on the main question.

ARTICLE V.

An amendment may be moved on any motion, and shall be decided before the original motion. If a question under debate contain several parts, any member may have it divided, and a question taken on each part. Any two members may call for the yeas and nays upon a question, and have them entered on the minutes of Classis.

ARTICLE VI.

Every member shall address himself to the President; and shall treat his fellow-members, especially

the President, with respect. If a member act or speak disorderly, it shall be the duty of the President, and the privilege of the other members, to call him to order.

ARTICLE VII.

A question shall not be called up, or reconsidered, during the same ordinary or extra session at which it has been decided, unless by the consent of two-thirds of the members who were present at the decision.

ARTICLE VIII.

Any member, who may think himself aggrieved by the decision of the Classis, shall have his dissent or protest, with his reasons, entered on the minutes— Provided he give notice of it during the session, and deliver his dissent or protest in writing to the stated Clerk, within ten days after the session of the Classis is closed.

ARTICLE IX.

If any member shall act contrary to these Rules, the President shall reprove or otherwise censure him, as the Classis shall judge proper. And if any member shall think himself denied of any right, or unjustly blamed by the President, he shall not speak disrespectfully to him, but modestly require the decision of the Classis in the case.

ARTICLE X.

Every member shall be accountable, at the call of the President, for any want of punctuality in attend-

ing the sessions of the Classis. And every member who shall not be present, and every Consistory who shall not have a delegate present, at every meeting of the Classis, are to consider themselves as under a citation to attend at the next ordinary meeting of the Classis to render reasons for such absence. Every member absenting himself without leave, during the sittings of the Classis, shall be called to an account for such absence; and the names of such as shall thus absent themselves, until the close of the Classis, shall be entered on the minutes, and they be called to account at the next meeting at which they shall attend.

ARTICLE XI.

The stated Clerk shall insert in a book of convenient size all alterations of these rules, and all additions to them, made by the Classis from time to time, and he shall exhibit such book at the meetings of the Classis.

CONSISTORIES AND CONGREGATIONS.

ARTICLE I.

It shall be the duty of every Consistory belonging to the Classis, to make to the Classis a report agreeably to the statistical tables, at every ordinary session in the spring. They shall also give an account of the state of religion in their Congregations, and of

the apparent cause of any increase or decline of religion. And at the same meeting the Classis shall hold a Censura Morum, and the following questions be asked of every member, namely :

1st. Are the doctrines of the Gospel preached in your Congregation in their purity, agreeably to the word of God, the Confession of Faith, and the Catechisms of our Church ?

2dly. Is the Heidelbergh Catechism regularly explained, agreeably to the Constitution of the Reformed Dutch Church ?

3dly. Are the catechising of the children and the instruction of the youth faithfully attended to ?

4thly. Is family visitation faithfully performed ?

5thly. Is the XXXII. Explanatory Article in the Constitution of our Church carefully obeyed ?

6thly. Is the temporal contract between Minister and people fulfilled in your Congregation ?

ARTICLE II.

In order that the object contemplated by the last rule may be more fully effected, the Classis at the close of their first sitting in every ordinary meeting in the spring, shall assign a time when they will hold a Censura Morum; and at that time, no member should be absent from his place. When the assigned hour arrives, the business shall commence with an appropriate prayer, and when the business

is closed, the Classis shall again engage in prayer. Any members who may be absent from the Classis at the time of attending to the *Censura Morum*, (and of such, notice shall be taken on the minutes) shall be subject to the *Censura Morum*, at the next ordinary meeting at which they attend, and of this again a minute shall be made.

ARTICLE III.

It shall be the duty of each Consistory subject to this Classis, to meet statedly every month, or at least every three months, in every year, to attend to the concerns entrusted to them by the Constitution of the Reformed Dutch Church; and they shall keep regular minutes of such proceedings as are of an ecclesiastical nature.

ARTICLE IV.

Collections shall be taken up in all the Churches under the care of the Classis, in aid of the contingent fund of the Classis, from time to time, as the Classis may direct, and the state of said fund require.

ARTICLE V.

Vacant Congregations are earnestly enjoined to assemble in some convenient place, if they have no regular house of worship, on every Lord's day, for purposes of public worship. The devotions shall be conducted by one of the Elders appointed by the Consistory, who shall perform the prayer, select the portion of Scripture to be read, and the practical

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